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Hanna Schissler, ed.: The Miracle Years

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INTRODUCTION

Writing About 1950s West Germany

HANNA SCHISLER

WHAT WAS SO MIRACULOUS about 1950s West Germany?¹ The weekly *Spiegel* first spoke of the economic miracle in 1950.² How people actually felt was an entirely different story: In 1951, 80 percent of the population considered 1945–48 to be the worst years of their lives, followed by the period 1949–51. People had a much better opinion even of the war years.³ Indeed, the West German economy experienced an unprecedented growth during the long 1950s,⁴ but so did the rest of Western Europe and the highly industrialized countries of North America. Since German cities lay in ruins, the effect of rebuilding the country was particularly striking. In retrospect, it becomes clear that the West German “miracle” was just a special case of what Eric Hobsbawm has called the “golden years” of economic growth, wealth, and well-being of people in Western industrialized countries.⁵ There are surprises and unexpected developments in history, but there are few miracles in our day and age. The “economic miracle” is a label attached to the 1950s in retrospect, in all likelihood at first by foreign observers of the rapid economic growth in West Germany. It is the thankless task of historians to deconstruct what once seemed miraculous.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REMARKS

Scholarship on West German history after 1945 has long been preoccupied with denazification; the chances for democracy after twelve years of National Socialist rule; economic development and the Marshall Plan; influences of the occupation powers, particularly the American impact on political as well as economic developments; the division of Germany; the history of institutions (churches, political parties, unions); and ideologies (conservatism, liberalism, socialism). Only fairly recently has historical scholarship begun to focus on such topics as popular culture, issues of gender and minorities, consumer society, filmic and literary representations of the German past, and the politics of remembrance. These more recent approaches are commonly associated with a new cultural history that stresses the deconstruction of previously established narratives and explores agency rather than structures and institutions.

This book fits into these trends. It is about generations, women and men, class and “race.”⁶ It deals with victims and perpetrators, surviving Jews, women of the rubble, “soldiers’ brides,” GIs, “Negermischlingskinder” (German children fathered by black occupation soldiers), returning POWs, Communists, *Halbstarke*

(young toughs), and *Gastarbeiter* (foreign laborers). It explores memory, life stories, “high” and “low” culture, film and literature, and American influences via popular culture. This book looks at readers, authors, and viewers. It examines adaptation processes of elites, explores consumption, and investigates the legacy of the past, its repression and the return of the repressed. It delves into questions of silence and explores ways of expression. It deals with refusal and collusion, with angst of nuclear war and the new beginnings of a civil society. It explores new forms of inequality and the demands of modern industrial society. It describes developments mainly in West Germany, but also in East Germany. It examines actual developments and analyzes forms of representation. On the other hand, there are two things that this book cannot achieve. It cannot replace a conventional textbook on Germany after 1945, which means it cannot provide an overview of the general course of historical developments, and unfortunately, it also cannot be consistently comparative on East and West German topics because the state of scholarship does not yet allow for such comparisons.

This collection contains the research of scholars who teach German history, film, and literature in the United States, Germany, or Israel. A considerable number of the contributors have taught outside the country of their birth and education. In more than one way, this has an impact on the intellectual perspectives represented in this volume. While the cross-fertilization of research on German and Central European history across the Atlantic continues to be vivid and fruitful, the “Atlantic divide” clearly plays a role in the ways in which we all approach our topics and conduct our scholarship. The differing perspectives in Germany and in the United States on problems of German history are sometimes quite impressive (without being clearly determined within a national framework, to be sure). A problem looks quite different when you swirl around its middle or when you look at it from some distance and see others immersed in it, struggling to keep their heads above water. The social and academic environment in which we do our research and ask our questions is part of our specific position. It might be commonplace to state that looking at German history from a distance is different from taking a careful look at close range, but the implications clearly are not—particularly if it comes to the most recent German history.

Currently, historians in Germany are preoccupied with the questions of what the two German dictatorships, the Nazi and the Communist past, might have in common and what consequences should be drawn from the legacies of those “two German pasts.” This debate is thoroughly overdetermined by West German intellectual paradigms. What this preoccupation actually achieves is to create a rapidly growing body of research on the history of the GDR, some of it quite remarkable in the depth and originality of its approach.⁷ While this is a logical result of the newly opened archives and the dramatic shift in perspective after 1989, its side effect is to move interest away from the history of West Germany. The events of 1989 threw East Germans into the postmodern condition with a vigor that can hardly be topped. In West Germany the great transformation of 1989 validated the road taken since 1949, more than even Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of the Federal Republic and an ardent promotor of integration with the West, could have expected

in his wildest dreams. Not too many historians, though, are willing to acknowledge that West Germany itself has become history and that after 1989 a multiplicity of German histories need to be considered. Reexamining the German past under the auspices of two dictatorial trajectories, Nazism and Communism, automatically validates West Germany and makes western Germans into judges and eastern Germans into the object of what westerners have embraced since the 1960s: a better “coming to terms with the past,” as the stereotypical formula goes. The absorption of East Germany validates the modernist superiority of the West German model (meaning its Westernization, Americanization, democratization) and inflates the model out of proportion. It nourishes illusions about the possibility of renewed West German master narratives, be they West Germany as a success story or the model of Westernization as the necessary (if not inevitable) consequence of the Nazi past and now, in fact, of two German pasts.

The hegemonic structures of this (West German) reexamination of the two dictatorial German pasts in the service of the assimilation of the ex-GDR clearly stand in the way of a thorough reexamination of West Germany as history.⁸ It actually tends to make the West German past into an everlasting present. This book attempts to reexamine West Germany as history. The postmodern condition in writing recent German history, with the loss of center, is a given, whether we like it or not. That is also the reason why a renewed national history of a (re-)unified Germany does not have much of a chance. The fragmentations of life worlds of groups of people, especially of East and West Germans, of women and men, of those who have work and those who do not, of different generations, and of the growing numbers of minorities in Germany, are just too prominent and claim recognition. They are not easily subsumed under a common national history.

American historians of German history have always had a particular take on German history, inspired in the second half of this century by the circumstances of the Second World War. The approach toward German history in the United States has been in many ways more open to the influences of social history and other “liberal” approaches. This had to do with the eminent role that German refugee historians—many of whom were German Jews—played in establishing German history in the United States.⁹ In recent years, historians of German history in the United States have been exposed much more than their colleagues in Germany to postmodernism and claims of identity politics. In their scholarship and their teaching, they must compete not only with other Europeanists, but also with the growing number of Asianists and Africanists. Western Civilization courses increasingly give way to world history courses, as the United States delves into exploring also its non-European legacies. The assertiveness of women as well as of minorities in American academia has strongly influenced the development of new topics beyond the predominance of national narratives.

The specific position of the authors of this volume as German historians in the United States, as American or Israeli historians of Germany, as German historians in East or in West Germany, or as wanderers between the academic worlds facilitates the acknowledgment of perspective and positionality, of the need to rewrite not only the East German past, but the West German one as well. Our actual frame

of reference is what determines our view of the past. This situation influences the questions we asked in this volume and informs our cultural history approach. This volume embraces the challenge “to find ways of presenting and making sense of the interacting multiplicity of stories.”¹⁰

WRITING ABOUT ONE’S OWN TIME

Most of the authors who contributed to this volume have their own personal experiences of what it was like to grow up in 1950s West Germany. They have images, impressions, and personal recollections. A number of the authors experienced the end of the war. Others were born in postwar Germany. Some, although they were born in Germany, are too young to remember what it was like in the 1950s. Others grew up in the United States, sometimes with very personal ties to the German past. While the intellectual detachment in the writing of history that was the ideal of previous generations of historians no longer is an agreed-upon norm, “the present as history” nevertheless raises particular issues that might not play a role when we research historical times that lie further back. Beyond the specificity of generational experiences and memory, there are, according to Eric Hobsbawm, two issues that play a role: the ways in which our views change over the course of our own life span and how we can escape or keep at bay in our historical judgment the general assumptions of the times in which we live.¹¹

Remembering is not an innocent act. Our own past is not easily accessible. The stories that we tell are woven into an interpretative and intercommunicative structure.¹² Memory is shaped according to our (changing) needs to place ourselves in the present. It establishes relationships with others and with ourselves. Personal histories frequently, in one way or another, determine the subject of one’s research. This is nowhere more relevant, and perhaps also more visible, than when we write about the time we experienced as children. Whatever we choose to research has some, however veiled, connection to our own lived lives.¹³ While the connection to our own lived lives is clear in theory (having been discussed on a more abstract level by Jürgen Habermas as *Erkenntnisinteresse*), it is more difficult to determine how it might play out in the concrete scenario of our work. The connection might be loose and superficial, or it might be consciously reflected upon (or “worked through,” as Germans call this activity) by the author. In any case, the chapters of this book are anchored in more than the thorough research of our sources.¹⁴

The authors of this volume, all professional historians or film or literary scholars, are perfectly well aware of the particular problems that writing about one’s own time poses for scholars. We all wrote “history” in this volume, and yet our personal narratives shaped our history writing in one way or another. Thus the question arises what connection personal narratives have to “history” or how they become “history.”

Since who we are and where we come from influences our scholarship and the kinds of questions we ask, I decided to confront the question of writing about one’s own time head-on, to think about my own memories and to solicit some personal

recollections, memories, and images of the 1950s from those authors who would have such recollections (and were willing to share them). Many complied and sent me spontaneous e-mail messages. In addition, two of the authors in this volume have already published essays that draw on their own personal memories.¹⁵ Another author used her recollections in the chapter that she wrote for this book.¹⁶ I was surprised and moved by the openness of my coauthors' responses to my questions, which images, impressions, and events they remember from the 1950s. They produced an amazing wealth of "memory material" that enabled me to include more than the usual survey of recent scholarship in this introduction.¹⁷

"Polling" the authors of this volume certainly does not generate a comprehensive picture of personal histories and memories of the 1950s, nor even a representative one. What it does do, though, is something else: Our own impressions and images address our connectedness to the research that we present in this volume, and they give the reader an impression of the wide range of experiences that we bring to this volume's topics. It needs to be noted that professional historians and literary scholars probably filter their "spontaneous" memories even more than others because they have a keen awareness of the weight of memory as well as of its constructedness. They know what is "important" in retrospect and in all likelihood shape their recollections accordingly, if in an unconscious manner.

Four topics crystallized in our recollections and imaginations: the hardship of the postwar years and the (early) 1950s, the rigidity and paternalistic nature of social relations, the impact of the encounter with Americans, and the veiled presence of the German past.

Elizabeth Heineman, one of those too young to remember the period, started out researching 1950s Germany with two assumptions: the 1950s as "the aftermath" and the similarity of the Federal Republic with 1950s America, which produced "the full-fledged, pre-feminist, bourgeois cage" for women. In pursuing her research, she eventually came to realize that the 1950s in Germany were not just "the aftermath" and that "the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s was not American suburbia."¹⁸ Rick McCormick came to take an interest in the 1950s through the nostalgia for that decade during the 1980s, when he spent a year as a Fulbright scholar in Berlin and hung out at Café Nierentisch in Berlin-Kreuzberg. For him the 1950s "were the Dark Ages, nothing but *Heimatfilme* and reaction." The Fassbinder trilogy (*Maria Braun*, *Lola*, and *Veronika Voss*), as well as some documentaries on the 1950s, gave him "more knowledge about the various things that got repressed in the 50s—i.e., that it was not quite so conservative and conformist as everyone said, even if that was the dominant tendency."¹⁹

The experiences of those of us who grew up in postwar Germany were more immediate. Playing in ruins was not only common but exciting and occurred frequently in spite of parents' strict admonitions. One could build hideouts, and the danger of collapsing ruins only increased the thrill. One also could catch tadpoles in bomb craters. Arnold Sywottek recalls an occasion when he and his father ate a whole loaf of fresh bread all at once. He remembers the shortage of housing for a refugee family, when three people shared one little room in the attic, a condition that lasted until 1951. The toilet was across the yard and did not have running

water. Taking a bath was a luxury in those times. Children bathed once a month in the laundry room, in the same water that an adult had used beforehand. (Heating water for individual baths was out of the question because heating materials were scarce and expensive.)²⁰ Such conditions improved slightly in the early to mid-1950s, when the children bathed once a week, all together in the same bathtub. It took a long time until housing conditions improved. Well into the 1950s, children had to share their rooms, sometimes with each other, sometimes with a grandparent. To get “a room of one’s own,” as Virginia Woolf asserted in another context, even if in size it was only six square meters, became a memorable event. If the situation in West Germany was rough in the early years after the war and well into the 1950s, conditions in East Germany were even harder and the difficult conditions lasted longer. In some realms, improvements came only in the 1970s when the socialist state started to invest in consumer goods and build the welfare state. In other areas, housing especially, positive changes had to await unification.

Authors recall social relations as hierarchical and paternalistic. A kind of threatening authoritarianism pervaded West German society, at least when it came to socializing “unruly” children. It is interesting to note in this context that Americans in the 1950s were also very concerned with social control and conformity.²¹ While I cannot explore the reasons for the pervasive rigidity of social relations during the 1950s in general, I nevertheless can point to the specificity of the German situation. Authority in Germany asserted itself everywhere in the 1950s in an exaggerated manner, particularly because male authority had been thoroughly undermined by the end of Nazism and the circumstances of the lost war. Some of the most troubling ruptures of postwar society played out in the relations between (male) adults and children.²² A policeman scolded Diethelm Prowe and his friend on the playground because they had committed the sin of standing on the seesaw with their dirty shoes. The policeman asked for their parents’ names, a common threat toward children in those years. “When he found out that we were fatherless, he said that our unruly behavior resulted from the fact that we were not raised by a father in an orderly manner,” recalls Prowe.²³ Authoritarianism, though, was limited neither to Konrad Adenauer, the patriarchal first chancellor of the Federal Republic, nor to harsh and threatening adults. Prowe continues: “We boys were very authoritarian as well. I clearly remember a conversation in the schoolyard, where we asked what might be the best government. We all agreed that a bad dictator like Hitler was disastrous, but better than democracy would be a good, strong-willed autocrat.”²⁴

Stigmatizing and marking others had not disappeared with the Third Reich, neither had antisemitism for that matter. Frank Stern, who perpetually disappointed his math teacher because he was not another Einstein, testifies to this.²⁵ Old, as well as new, social divisions played out in the supposedly leveled class society of the 1950s. As Prowe writes:

We were extremely suspicious of the “trash” who had lived on the other side of the street since the end of the war. These were families who had been bombed-out when the old part of Bonn had been completely destroyed and burned down in 1944. With these peo-

ple we had no contact whatsoever. The kids were “Strassenjungen” and the adults “Pack schlägt sich, Pack verträgt sich.” It was a neatly divided class society on the same street. My classmates and I all were afraid of the *Halbstarken* (young toughs), who were loitering at street corners, playing with knives, smoking, and screaming at passers-by—also a piece of class society.²⁶

I remember the *Mischehen*, the mixed marriages (between Catholics and Protestants), which were talked about a lot in the 1950s. These mixed marriages could not work, so I heard, because the marriage partners were too different and eventually the differences would prevail. Denomination also determined with whom one was supposed to or not supposed to play in the streets.

What were the public and political events that some of us remembered or that had an impact on us? There was the East German uprising of 1953, the 1954 world soccer championship in Bern, aptly described in Friedrich Christian Delius’s novella, *Der Sonntag, an dem ich Weltmeister wurde*,²⁷ the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the return of the last POWs from the Soviet Union in 1956, then certainly the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the *Spiegel*-affair in 1962, and the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963.

The banning of the West German Communist party (KPD) in 1956 marked a caesura for Kaspar Maase because of his parents’ involvement in the party. To this day, Maase wonders what he might be able to contribute to his generation’s experience, because as a child of Communist parents, his recollections are “extremely unrepresentative.” A positive attitude toward, or an identification with, Communism was indeed the exception rather than the rule. I remember that Communists and Nazis were bad and a threat of some kind (the two collapsed into totalitarianism), but I could neither fathom the reasons nor the extent of that threat as a child. Communists as well as Nazis were the big others in my childhood, but they definitely lacked flesh and blood. One of my brothers later told me that he thought that Russians were green animals to be avoided at all costs. In those times every form of critique in West Germany was countered and discredited with a scathing “Why don’t you go over there (nach drüben gehen) if you don’t like it here?”

Then there was the emergence of the consumer society: the first family car was a memorable event, as was the first transistor radio, the first refrigerator, or the first Vespa (motor scooter). Needless to say that the first family car was usually a VW Beetle, either Standard or Export. It was “naturally” the fathers or other male members of the family who would drive this new family acquisition, as Prowe notes: “Driving mothers did not exist, that would have seemed unnatural to us as well as probably to the mothers themselves, this in spite of the fact that my mother had owned an Opel during the 1920s.”²⁸ The derogatory remark “Frau am Steuer” (woman behind the steering wheel) was widely heard during my childhood and youth. Cars in general were objects of desire, and nothing marked the ascent of the West German economy better than the exploding motorization of the population. The boys would collect and exchange picture cards of car models; the girls would collect and exchange glossy pictures of little people and animals (Glanzbilder).

All of us found America highly attractive: care packages would occasionally ar-

rive at my parents' home. I did not know what they were; I only knew that when such a package arrived, the whole family gathered around it and as it was opened, my mother and my aunt would start to cry. In my family, these packages came from a woman in Iowa with whom my mother corresponded in her rudimentary English and exchanged family photos until this benefactor whom we had never met died in the 1980s. Later on we would also send care packages for "the brothers and sisters" in East Germany or, as it was called, "the zone."

Since we lived close to the military base in Baumholder, I had direct exposure to Americans. The GIs would give us children rides in their jeeps, and sometimes the GIs were black. We had never seen a black person before. After some time, the families of the American soldiers moved to the base. The visual gap between us German children and the American kids whom I could observe through a high fence could not have been greater: The American kids had colorful clothes, and the girls wore cute dresses, while we dressed in gray sweaters, skirts, and pants that were not particularly well-fitting. Everybody in my generation remembers the unspeakable waistband (*Leibchen*) and garters that were supposed to keep our knitted stockings in place. I managed to make contact across the fence with two neatly dressed girls with curly hair. (They put in curlers to make their hair curly at age six, which I found as worldly as I found it flabbergasting.) I do not know how we spoke with each other, but communicate we did. They even managed to get me into the compound to play until my mother forbade further contact. For fear of what? Contagion with consumerism? Americanism? But perhaps she just wanted to protect me from being exposed to an infinitely more comfortable life (and premature forms of female vanity), a life for which we could not have hoped at that time. I will never forget how these girls would step on a chair in their kitchen and take handfuls of candy out of a glass that their mother had put up on the cupboard. It seemed the most natural thing on earth to eat candy by the handful, and I was invited to do the same.

How much did we know about the recent German past? That certainly differed, and here is where contentious memories are most prevalent. The knowledge in families of survivors of the Holocaust was of a different sort than the common vague stirrings with which most of us grew up. Frank Stern at first thought that he did, after all, have something in common with his classmates because they would also speak about "the camps." But when they started to tell stories of how their fathers and uncles had returned from the camps, he blurted out that nobody returns from the camps and encountered considerable hostility from his teacher for this remark. His mother then briefly explained to him that there were "their camps and our camps." It took him a while to understand that "our camps really were their camps, and that the POW camps were something quite different."²⁹

For most, the past had an uncomfortable, secretive presence, as for Maria Höhn, who remembers her childhood:

This Hitler guy lurked in the picture, but it was completely unclear to me what he was all about. I thought of him as a huge, important person because people referred to the *Hitlerzeit* (the Hitler period). Or they would say, "Unter Hitler hatte es das nicht gegeben"

(“this would not have happened under Hitler”). People often would mention that Hitler had also done good stuff, especially in the beginning. You know, the usual, the trains, the *Autobahn*, the *Arbeitsdienst* (Labor Service). . . . It was not clear to me where the Jews came from. . . . Who were Jews? . . . I had never met one, they seemed like some sort of people from another world.³⁰

But the adults would on occasion talk about Jews: “Even after what Hitler did to the Jews, they still have not learned!”³¹ And then there were the jokes that dealt with the recent mass extermination of Jews, particularly the one about how many Jews would fit in a VW Beetle. The answer: at least one hundred, in the ashtray. Did we laugh at such jokes? Yes, we did. The fact that children in Israel also told each other this joke does not make it any better.³² It was the kind of laughter that has many layers of discomfort.³³ To do something that required particular endurance, or to laugh *bis zur Vergasung* (until one was gassed), was a quite common expression in 1950s and 1960s West Germany (and beyond, I am afraid). That is how the unspeakable pervaded the present and how the collective unconscious asserted itself for those who were born after 1945 or were small children at the end of the war. We also saw in school pictures of concentration camps and dead bodies, which no one helped us to understand because they supposedly “spoke for themselves.” Maria Höhn claims that she understood about the genocide that Germans had committed when she heard the joke about the Jews in a VW Beetle. I actually doubt that things become that clear in the spur of a moment. People know and don’t know, both at the same time. Knowledge—especially of complex issues—is a process, not an enlightening flash that instantaneously illuminates us. This is also why so much in the debates on how much people knew or did not know is so twisted and wrong in many ways.

Uneasy references to the past were ubiquitous in any case. To attempt to discipline youths by referring to Hitler’s work camps was as common as to hurl at an “enemy” on the schoolyard, “They forgot to gas you.” References on the other hand could also take the form that I remember from angry conversations between my parents: “They are again everywhere.” I did not know who “they” were, but I clearly got a sense that something serious had happened and that this “something” caused anger and sometimes despair in my parents. “They” in my case were the “German Christians,” those who went along with the Nazi regime, while my parents who had been members of the oppositional Confessing Church, did not. During the 1950s they did not witness the new Christian beginning for which they had hoped, but instead what many in West Germany came to call “restoration.”

It could thus happen that many of my generation, the one labeled in retrospect “the 1968 generation,” discovered in the 1960s and turned with youthful aggression against their elders what the latter, in fact, already knew: that the members of my generation belonged to the people of perpetrators; that someone in their vicinity, perhaps even their own father or grandfather, was a murderer. As Michael Geyer has put it: “There was never any doubt that the past was with us. The silence about it had less to do with fathers and mothers than with sons and daughters. The silence was my own. And this is strange in view of what the books say because at

that point I am supposed to have rebelled in order to find out what I already knew.”³⁴

That serious dealings with the past only started after 1968 is a convenient myth. What Michael Geyer and Miriam Hansen have called “the certainty and self-righteousness of this rebellion” (of the 1968 generation)³⁵ also upset Diethelm Prowe, who had emigrated to the United States in 1957 and then returned to West Germany as a student in the mid-1960s.

I found it very disturbing how harshly the students attacked their parents’ generation. I found it very arrogant—as if they could know for sure that they would have done the right thing in their place. Their own violence-glorifying slogans, in turn, were quite reminiscent of the violent generation of young Nazis in the 30s. I found it especially astounding how in 1965–66, the students in Berlin saw certain students from Berkeley and Stanford, some of whom I knew personally, as peace-bringing prophets.

The (negative) fixation of the members of the 1968 generation on their parents’ generation and their sometimes tragic psychosocial attachment to that which they tried so hard to overcome has been described as *telescoping*, a term coined by Heinz Kohut. *Telescoping* means that the parents’ experience and fate has been pushed into the next generation. According to this interpretation, members of the 1968 generation have taken over the task of interpreting their parents’ lives. As Heinz Bude describes it, “Issues which for reasons of shame, despair or guilt the parents find insupportable are devolved onto the child.” The child is thus caught in an “identificatory trap” and “becomes the guarantor for a secret world of the parent. In the end, the child protects the parents’ real history by making that history its own, albeit in a concealed fashion.”³⁶ Even in their rebellious struggle to free themselves, the 1968ers in West Germany showed the attachment and deep connectedness with the deeds of their parents’ generation and with their fate.

This book is organized around specific topics that break through time lines as well as through categories. Thus issues of gender, minorities, memory, or East German developments are not isolated, but rather integrated into the five sections.

The topic of the first section is the weight of the Nazi past, attempts at new beginnings. The section deals with how memories of the war and the postwar period were shaped around issues of gender and how a new (West) German sense of national identity emerged from women’s and men’s experiences. It describes the shaping of a new generation of Germans and their growing into being East and West Germans. Mechanisms of dealing with “others” are the topic of the second section: the few surviving Jews who stayed in Germany faced particular problems and African-American GIs who had German girlfriends faced discrimination from Germans as well as from their white American compatriots. The children who came from such connections posed a particular test to the willingness and ability of the German state to integrate minorities. Anticommunism became a major force of integration for West Germany. Issues of memory are again addressed in section three, which focuses on silence and the return of the repressed in the everyday lives of ordinary people, in films, and in the producers and readers of literature. Section

four deals with West Germany's modernity, the emergence of a consumer society, the project of "normalizing" relations between women and men in a modern industrialized society, the opposition to rearmament and nuclear weapons, and the emergence of a civil society in West Germany. Finally, in the last section, the victory of popular culture over high culture and the multiple adaptations of American influences are discussed. The introductions to the sections will point out connections between the individual chapters. An epilogue on 1968 concludes the volume.

NOTES

1. I wish to thank Eric Weitz, Marion Kaplan, Ute Daniel, and Dorothee Wierling for their helpful criticism. I also gained some valuable insights from a lively discussion in Roger Chickering's ongoing seminar, where I presented the thoughts developed in this introduction in the spring of 1999; Waltraut Schelkle's and Christine von Oertzen's comments were particularly helpful. Eva Schissler, Rita Bashaw, and Jeff Schutts encouraged me to stick with the personal tone that characterizes this introduction. Above all, I am indebted to Eric Weitz and Marion Kaplan for their invaluable help in editing that makes the text more readable.

2. *Spiegel* 1950, nos. 4, 5. See Christoph Kleßmann, *Zwei Staaten, eine Nation: Deutsche Geschichte 1955–1970* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1988), 63, n. 6.

3. See Lutz Niethammer's and Michael Geyer's chapters in this volume; here Michael Geyer, 383.

4. Werner Abelshauser, *Die langen Fünfziger Jahre: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949–66* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1987).

5. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), chapter 9.

6. I am critical of the use of the term "race" in current scholarship, particularly in the United States. The use of the term itself displays—against all intentions—a racist mindset. But since its use is so widespread, it is hard to avoid altogether. I follow Gerda Lerner's suggestion and place it in quotation marks. See her preface to *Why History Matters: Life and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and particularly Marion Berghahn's long-overlooked taking issue with the use of the term "race" in her *German-Jewish Refugees in England: The Ambiguities of Assimilation* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 9–11.

7. See, for example, Alf Lüdtke and Peter Becker, eds., *Akten, Eingaben, Schaufenster: Die DDR und ihre Texte* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997); Harmut Kaelble et al., eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), or Dorothee Wierling's forthcoming study on the cohort of 1949.

8. Norbert Frei, "Treibhaus des Westens: Neue Literatur zur 'Adenauer-Zeit,'" *Neue Politische Literatur* 43 (1998): 278–88.

9. See Volker Berghahn, "Deutschlandbilder 1945–1965: Angloamerikanische Historiker und moderne deutsche Geschichte," in Ernst Schulz, ed., *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg 1945–1965* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1989), 239–72; Hartmut Lehmann and James J. Sheehan, eds., *An Interrupted Past: German-Speaking Refugee Historians in the United States After 1933* (Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1991).

10. Michael Geyer and Konrad Jarausch, "The Future of the German Past: Transatlantic Reflections for the 1990s," *Central European History* 22 (1989): 229–59, here 245.

11. Eric Hobsbawm, "The Present as History," in idem, *On History* (New York: New Press, 1997), 228–40; see also Michael Kammen, "Personal Identity and the Historian's Vocation," in

idem, *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3–74.

12. Exemplary in this regard is Carolyn Kay Steedman's *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

13. Historian Jonathan Spence has observed that each of his books "was written in response to a certain moment in my life. I don't know which was changing what. I am never the same after a book." Quoted in Kammen, "Personal Identity," 11.

14. Lewis O. Mink, "Everyman His or Her Own Annalist," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 4 (1981): 777–90; Steedman, *Landscape*, 132.

15. Michael Geyer and Miriam Hansen, "German-Jewish Memory and National Consciousness," in Geoffrey Hartman, ed., *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 173–90; Frank Stern, "Gebrochene Wahlverwandtschaften: Über eine jüdische Nachkriegs-kindheit in Deutschland," *Sendetext*, Süddeutscher Rundfunk, December 1997. Translations from the German are mine.

16. See Dorothee Wierling's chapter in this volume.

17. There are a number of good reviews on recent and not so recent scholarship: Robert Moeller gives a useful review in his "Introduction: Writing the History of West Germany," in idem, *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 1–30. See also Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, "Deutsche Zeitgeschichte nach 1945," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 41 (1993): 1–29; Paul Erker, "Zeitgeschichte als Sozialgeschichte," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 19 (1993): 202–38; Wolfgang Benz, "Deutsche Geschichte nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg: Probleme und Tendenzen zeitgeschichtlicher Forschung in der Bundesrepublik," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 16 (1987): 398–420; Christoph Kleßmann, "Ein stolzes Schiff und krächzende Möwen: Die Geschichte der Bundesrepublik und ihre Kritiker," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 11 (1985): 476–94; most recently, Norbert Frei, "Treibhaus des Westens."

18. Elizabeth Heineman in an e-mail message to the author, 8 October 1998.

19. Rick McCormick in an e-mail message to the author, 24 September 1998. See also Frank Stern, "Wahlverwandtschaften," 54: "Those years were more complicated than those who only remember *Heimatfilme* and conservative *Kitsch*, wish to acknowledge. The 1950s were the German decade of nonconcurrence (Ungleichzeitigkeit)."

20. Arnold Sywottek in a letter to the author, 28 September 1998.

21. See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

22. See Dorothee Wierling's chapter in this volume.

23. Diethelm Prowe in an e-mail message to the author, 30 September 1998.

24. Ibid.

25. For Frank Stern, growing up Jewish in postwar West Germany meant "either ignoring or living out those tough (knallharte) contradictions" of a society that in discussing its antisemitism would talk immediately about Germans' deplorable hostility toward foreigners, of the disastrous images of foreigners in German culture. "That is well intentioned and yet so awfully wrong. The problem of the others with us was precisely that we were not foreigners, that instead we belonged in innumerable ways," Frank Stern, "Gebrochene Wahlverwandtschaften."

26. Diethelm Prowe's e-mail account.

27. Friedrich Christian Delius, *Der Sonntag, an dem ich Weltmeister wurde* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1994).

28. Diethelm Prowe's e-mail account.

29. Frank Stern, "Gebrochene Wahlverwandtschaften."

30. Maria Höhn's e-mail message to the author, 1 October 1998.

31. This remark pertained to the bar scene in Baumholder, where it was supposedly mainly Jewish owners who brought striptease and prostitution to Germany.

32. I owe this information to Dorothee Wierling.

33. See also Frau Kaufmann's guilt-ridden recollection in Lutz Niethammer's chapter of how they, as ten- or eleven-year-old girls, laughed about what supposedly happened to Jews "over there in the woods, 259."

34. Michael Geyer's personal recollection in Michael Geyer and Miriam Hansen, "German-Jewish Memory and National Consciousness," 179.

35. Ibid., 176.

36. Heinz Bude, "The German *Kriegskinder*: Origins and Impact of the Generation of 1968," in Mark Roseman, *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 290–305, here 302; Heinz Bude, "Die Achtundsechziger-Generation im Familienroman der Bundesrepublik," in Helmut König, Wolfgang Kuhlmann, and Klaus Schwabe, eds., *Vertuschte Vergangenheit* (Munich: Beck, 1997), 297; see also Bude's *Das Altern einer Generation: Die Jahrgänge 1938–1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), especially 37–102, and his case studies.